

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 02103 121123Z

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2467

INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

S E C R E T LISBON 2103

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: POSSIBLE POLITICAL POWER PLAY

1. FOR FIRST TIME SINCE MARCH 11, RUMORS OF A NEW POWER PLAY ARE WIDESPREAD. WE HAVE NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION, BUT HAVE RECEIVED ONE SECOND-HAND REPORT FROM GOVERNMENT SOURCE THAT SOMETHING WOULD TAKE PLACE SUNDAY, APRIL 13. SOME MILITARY UNITS HAVE ALSO BEEN WARNED TO EXPECT TROUBLE THIS WEEKEND.

2. IF SOMETHING IS IN THE AIR, WE DOUBT IT WOULD BE GENUINE RIGHT-WING COUP, ALTHOUGH POSSIBILITY OF DESPERATE ACTION BY FAR OUT GROUPS CANNOT BE TOTALLY DISCOUNTED. ONE HYPOTHESIS IS THAT SOME AFM ELEMENTS MAY BE PLANNING A PLOY TO ENABLE THEM TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POWER FURTHER BY ROLLING UP CERTAIN REMAINING MODERATE AND RIGHT-WING OPPOSITION FACTIONS. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY COULD BE A POWER PLAY BY ROSA COUTINHO FORCES WHICH HAVE BEEN MOVING MORE AND MORE INTO FOREFRONT OF POLITICAL SCENE. COUTINHO DOESN'T LIKE SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP AND IS UNEASY ABOUT TOO HEAVY RELIANCE OF AFM ON PCP. POWER PLAY BY HIM WOULD BE DESIGNED TO ESTABLISH HIS OWN POLITICAL FORCE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS.

3. PS, CDS, AND PPD CONTACTS HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN TO EMBOFFS DURING PAST WEEK THAT SOMETHING MAY HAPPEN OR BE STAGED THAT WOULD PROVIDE A REASON FOR CANCELLING ELECTIONS. NONE OF THESE

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CONTACTS, HOWEVER, HAS COME UP WITH ANYTHING CONCRETE TO SUPPORT

THAT THESIS.

4. SO FAR DECIBEL COUNT RELATIVELY LOW BUT WE WILL KEEP OUR
EYE ON SITUATION.
CARLUCCI

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